

Bears and other woodland critters

Brought to life by Jon Parker's chainsaw artistry

by Dave Gibson

An inconspicuous willow trunk laying next to the roundabout in Nederland will soon be brought to life for Frozen Dead Guy Days. Jon Parker of Sun King Chainsaw Art plans to fashion a wood sculpture for the event from that log. Commissioned by the city of Nederland, designs for the project are still being discussed. The sculpture will be set in the middle of the traffic-circle greeting thousands of visitors.

In fact Jon's work can already be enjoyed all over town. One of his owls graces Blue Owl Books. His wolf is on display at Ace Hardware and an imposing five foot tall bear can be seen at the Bears Brothers Bistrot. Jon's shop is just off the roundabout and on warm days one can witness him crafting his pieces with chainsaw, grinders, and drill. When a piece is finished it is coated with spray paint and polyurethane. His latest project involves four, three foot

tall caricaturized moose that will hold up a shelf under the beer taps at Roy's Last Shot in Gilpin County. Although occasionally dabbling in other animals, bears are Jon's specialty. Each one is masterfully designed and executed in a variety of whimsical poses. Smiling, each possesses that "I'm up to no good but you can't dislike me because I'm so cute" look. Blue or green marbles serve as eyes project-

ing the innocent, but mischievous sentiment. Jon works with most any kind of wood depending on availability including walnut, cottonwood, linden, spruce, and beetle-killed ponderosa or lodgepole pine. Completed works sell for \$80 per foot and can be custom-made to any size or pose. During my visit I'm shown a partially formed block of wood that will become a bear riding a snowboard. Each wood sculpture has a heart carved onto it. Upon receiving the heart Jon says his animals become "Ned Critters."

Every work yard should have a mascot and in Sun King Chainsaw Art's case that mascot is Mr. Rotten. Lovingly painted green and red long ago, he has no heart but faithfully watches the grounds with his dusky eyes. Handsomely weathered, his unique grimace belies his contented role as guardian. He will never be confused with a "cute" bear and is not for sale. Jon advises that if you don't take care of your bear it will turn into Mr. Rotten.

To see Mr. Rotten and the bears visit Jon at 45 E. Second St., Nederland, CO, or call him at 303-258-7494, or check out his art at www.sunkingchainsawart.com.



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